SARVODAYA AND WORLD PEACE

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—J. C. KUMARAPPA

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" SARVODAYA " is a Socio-economic order based on Gandhian Principles of non-violence and Truth working for the uplift of every individual. • • •

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Sarvodaya And World Peace

(being a summary of speeches delivered at Paris, Stockholm and Berlin in the months of June & July, 1954)

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MODEL CENTRE FOR VILLAGE INDUSTRIES
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by

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SARVODAYA AND WORLD PEACE

In the past, wars were confined to belligerent individuals either for territorial acquisition, personal glory, revenge or for loot. Their own mercenary troops fought and conquered or destroyed themselves. Today, the conflicts are extended to the common population of non-combatants—men, women and children—to whole nations. These are whipped up into a frenzy of envy, jealousy and hatred and indiscriminately destroyed by weapons of whole-sale destruction which once let loose cannot be controlled. It is, therefore, imperative that each one of us should study the causes of war and the conditions which will bring up peace and work relentlessly for peace.

Until now the more powerful have controlled the comparatively weak nations politically and economically and exploited these for their own benefit—keeping the latter undeveloped or under-developed. This cannot last any longer. Each nation should go forward without external interference. Any nation that goes beyond the needs of a Police force or is found within the territorial waters of another nation, with its armed forces, must be dubbed an aggressor and all others should help to oust such an aggressor back into its own domain.

Paper agreements and appeals have little effect in bringing about lasting peace. The seed of war and international tension lies largely in the field of economics. So, if we want to deal effectively with war we must

study the present day methods of production, distribution and consumption. War is the end-result of the friction generated in the daily life of everyone of us, and is not the result of the evil doings of one or two outstanding world figures. If anything, such world figures are but the victims of our greed to benefit from the weak position of our neighbours.

By nature most of our countries are blessed with resources which if we handle in a proper and rational way, we shall generate peaceful living for all of us. It is the attempt of the more powerful to turn conditions in their own favour, that brings nations into conflict and turns our neighbours into enemies.

RESOURCES

The least that each nation can do is to aim at being able to provide its people with food, clothing and shelter. After that, if any resources of land, water and minerals are available, we may enter into trade and commerce by attempting to supply the demands of luxury and enter into foreign exchange of goods. Any maladjustments and misdirections lead us into trouble.

For instance, Indo-China produces nearly 85% of the world's supply of rubber. But it connot by any stretch of imagination, use all this production. Most of the highly developed and industrial countries need such raw materials. How can they get at this basic need ? Only by controlling the direction and production of this material. To do this the foreigners attempt to get

hold of the country. This is the basis of all colonialism. The people of Indo-China, instead of producing so much rubber, should lay stress on the production of materials for their own food, clothing and shelter and promote primarily industries conducive to such an economy. Only such direction of their economic life will bring contentment for the large masses of their people.

Similarly, Ceylon produces chiefly tea and rubber. What can be done with such an economy ? Ceylon is an island. It can be easily controlled by a naval power and made to surrender its economic life to the needs of the foreign manufacturers as it imports all its requirements of cotton yarn and most of its food. Whatever wealth is made by its trade remains mainly in the hands of the exporters and importers and leaves the country in insecurity as people cannot eat the rubber or clothe themselves in tea-leaves if the island were surrounded by interested parties. Hence their safety lies in moulding their economic life to suit their national requirements.

Treasures in an open house tempt the passerby. If we do not wish robbers to visit our houses we must keep our doors closed Our natural resources are our patrimony. Manchuria has a wealth of coal. It was this attraction that made Japan conquer Manchuria. We should plan our mining operations according to our needs and not trade on it. When our hidden treasures get exhausted it leads to violence. As far as possible

we must live within our own resources and conserve them for our future generations. It is the extravagant use and exploitation of petrol that is driving America to seek violently other fields in Transjordan, Iran and Borneo. That has made her a belligerent nation. For this we need long term planning.

EMPLOYMENT

Every raw material presents opportunities of employment. The export of raw materials, therefore, deprives the locality producing the raw material of the possible employment. For this reason, as a rule, the people of the locality must work on the raw materials available and should be paid adequately. Then there will be no "under-developed" countries, for every country will engage itself in producing all the goods it needs that can be made out of its own raw materials, and exchange its surplus for other articles, it cannot otherwise obtain.

METHOD OF PRODUCTION

Thus far we have seen how to utilize our resources. Now we must consider how we should proceed to convert our raw materials into consumer goods, especially in under-developed countries. Most of the countries of Asia are under-developed. They all represent an enormous labour power which is largely unused or under-employed. This indicates that, as far as possible, we should avail ourselves of this power. In the first instance at least this does not call for

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"labour saving" devices, but methods of production involving increased labour forces. In this way, we shall be able to bring satisfaction to everyone of this neglected section of people.

WAGES

The amount of returns to be paid to our workers must be based on what is needed to maintain him or her on a full diet and on a reasonable and suitable standard of living. At present, in capitalist countries especially, the price of commodities controls wages. Wages are largely an elastic factor—the higher the market price and profit, the better will be the wages. It should not be so at the basic wage level. The elastic element is in the nature of a profit and so should not be brought into the equation at the wage level. Basically workers should be paid what is needed to maintain them throughout the year.

In India our landless labour has work mostly during the monsoon or rainy seasons and then at a very low starvation level. They should be paid enough to maintain them throughout the year on a reasonable standard. This will immediately put up the prices of agricultural products, which will lead to a better distribution of wealth and satisfaction.

Dissatisfaction is one of the fertile seeds of conflict.

COST TO THE PRODUCER

In the so called "under-developed" countries the producer of primary products rarely gets

a square deal. Every producer is entitled to have his upkeep included in the price of the finished product. If anything less is recovered for the producer from the consumer's price there results violence through exploitation. This multiplied, results in dissatisfaction and wars.

In our country, the landless labourers are starving, because the prices of raw materials do not provide for their adequate maintenance. If they did, the prices would rise. Are we, as consumers, prepared to pay honestly for what we get ?

Prices to be fair should be regulated by the producers and others concerned For this purpose at present there is no adequate organization, with the consequence that what is due to the primary producer, who is the weakest number on the line, is cut down to a minimum.

PLACE OF AGRICULTURE

Agriculture should not be treated as an industry and should not exist on the price mechanism. We all know the scandals caused by burning a good harvest of wheat, to raise the prices, by reducing the stock. Such acts must be regarded as utterly antisocial and dealt with accordingly.

In certain quarters in the west there is much appreciation of the Bhoodan-Movement but the spirit of it remains untranslated into action as they have not yet found the counterpart of it in industrialised

countries. They express their sympathy but have no land to donate ! A programme like Bhoodan need not be copied in all its entirety. What is essential is to give vent to the spirit of sharing.

In the West, the machinery for sharing exists but it is brought into play from the wrong end and so has resulted in exploitation and violence. What is wanted is to adapt this machinery for sharing in such a way that it will generate non-violence.

This machinery for sharing, as developed in the West, has three parts. The first is the price mechanism, the second labour unions and the third, propaganda, advertisement and high pressure salesmanship. All these are now used to exploit and extract an undue share of material wealth for oneself. If the same machinery is put on the reverse gear it can be used for sharing, so as to promote non-violence and social harmony.

PRICE MECHANISM

Middlemen fix prices with a view to increasing customers. By a larger turnover and a low price they hope to increase their own gains. Consequently they cut down the share of the price that should go to the primary producer and leave him with hardly enough to support himself. In price fixing the producer of the raw materials should have a voice. His share should be calculated on the basis of what he requires to maintain himself and his family all through the year on a reasonable standard of living. A great many

primary producers, like the landless in India, are starving. Such a situation cannot be tolerated in an equalitarian society and if left unremedied for a long time will end in violence.

If the price includes enough for the raw material producer and if this extra has to be paid by the consumer such price is bound to be high. So there will be fewer consumers involving a loss to middlemen. Consequently giving a due share to the raw material producer will entail a sacrifice on the part of both middlemen and consumers. This is the sharing that has to be accomplished through the price mechanism. At present, the less industrialised and under-developed countries are left at the mercy of highly industrialised countries and are being impoverished steadily. This situation also calls for justice and fairplay. Will the industrialised countries be prepared to part with their ill-gotten share ?

LABOUR UNIONS

The function performed by labour unions to extract an increased share for labour, by collective bargaining, by organizing strikes etc., is somewhat suicidal and is largely based on force and coercion. Such sharing should be brought about through voluntary means by mutual understanding and negotiation. Will the employers be reasonable enough to mete out justice and reduce their own share of profits ?

PROPAGANDA, ADVERTISEMENT AND SALESMANSHIP

At present various dubious methods are used in telling half truths and white lies to dupe the public

by advertising goods to be what they are not. Unwary customers are thus made to part with their purchasing power for unneeded goods or even for unwanted articles. Honesty has to be introduced in the place of high pressure salesmanship; and enslaving devices, like the part payment system, should be abandoned if customers are to live within their means. This calls for vigilance and proper education of the public and national workers.

DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION AS TO COST

Today the consumer does not know what constituent items he is paying for in the price. He knows of a "fixed" price. This he pays and fully believes that he has discharged his duty honestly. If only the consumer knows that the price he is paying is not fair but is too low to give an adequate return to the producer, he himself will probably not be at peace. It is therefore our duty to make available to all concerned, full information as to the spread of the cost of an article.

If, for example, the smoker knew that the tobacco he smokes is produced under conditions which lead to the starvation of other people his conscience will not allow him to patronise that brand of tobacco. We must bring this moral force into play in the economic sector.

To work out this programme we have to educate buyers, middlemen and the producers; who should organize the movement of goods rationally, and set

up a strong machinery for the fixing of prices. Before undertaking all this we ourselves should be willing to make the necessary sacrifices.

If we can organise the primary producer and the consumer by disseminating correct information regarding articles put out for sale, it will go a long way in introducing, even in highly industrialized places, the spirit of Bhoodan, the spirit, namely, of sharing equitably the gains of industry. To serve in this way we need character and courage. This work is bound to create opposition from vested interests a least in the beginning. Are we ready to face the situation and abide by the consequences in the interest of a great cause ?

By these means we shall be filling up also the gap that exists in wealth and opportunities between the so called industrialized and the under-developed countries. Such a course will remove discontent and ease the tension which are the fruitful causes of war. It is only such fundamental reorganisation of our economic order that can bring in lasting peace. We cannot afford to lose time and effort on makeshift arrangements that will break down at the first approach of any stress or strain on the various component parties. This way is worth pursuing if we desire permanent peace. Are we prepared to pay the price ?

MARKETS

The goods we manufacture must have a ready and local market. Wars are caused by attempts to control markets.

It was such competition that drove the United Kingdom, Germany and Japan into devastating wars. The under-developed countries supply raw materials to and consume finished products from the industrialized countries. This creates fertile beds for colonies. Every country should be allowed to develop in its own way, without let or hindrance from outsiders. Foreign interference suppresses independence and leads to violence.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN SURPLUSES ONLY

When goods are produced they should first be available to the producing country and only the surplus left over should be free for export to other countries.

DISCRIMINATING CONSUMPTION

If collectively we are not able to bring about such noninterference, the citizens of under-developed countries should be so educated as to develop into discriminating buyers.

They should not buy foreign articles where locally manufactured goods are available. This is a difficult policy to practice because of the temptation of cheap prices aud perhaps better goods being available from elsewhere. But such a development of character is absolutely essential for the production of peaceful conditions. We have to follow the tortoise in the economic field. We have to draw ourselves into our national shell for protection, when the danger of exploitation presents itself. This is the "Swadeshi" of non-violence.

Without studying this question minutely many persons are carried away by the talk of "world Markets". Today such a talk is dope meted out by the capitalist. The Soviet Union has set a good example in these matters by making foreign trade a state monopoly and by keeping foreign traders from entering the inside local market. These measures ensure better wages and living condition to workers.

I have, in passing, cited these illustrations to bring out in relief the deep set causes of present day colonialism which gives rise to the cause of war in the economic field. At present we witness the strange phenomenon of science and human effort struggling to produce more and more goods and yet, in most countries, the results of all this effort do not seem to raise the people form poverty, starvation and distress. Of late, even human life is made very insecure and such existence as we can expect is made one of worry and care. The modern weapons of mass destruction cause nightmares throughout all the countries of world. The present day methods of warfare need little to condemn them. Apart from the general, moral and social considerations the economic consequences are forbidding. The war brought about by imperialism destroys more than the good it brings to its few beneficiaries. The masses of people have nothing but destruction to gain by the transaction—not only material destruction but what is worse is the human demoralization and destruction. This one issue is in itself enough to condemn them.

CONCLUSION

Hence we see a great deal of our effort to obtain freedom from world tension lies in recasting our economic organisation. (1) The raw material producer must be given sufficient to maintain himself on a reasonable standard of living; (2) Prices must be fixed with such as the base, and the raw material producer must have a voice in fixing the prices of his produce; (3) Raw materials must be converted into consumer goods where the raw materials are produced, thus providing further opportunities of employment for the people of the locality; (4) The consumer must be educated to realize his duties towards the producer, and for this purpose he should be supplied authentic information about the component parts of the price of articles; and (5) Most international trade must be in surpluses.

Economic security and fair play is the foundation of goodwill. They alone will dispel suspicion, hatred and jealousy which disturb the peace of the world. Therefore to bring about world peace we have to find ways and means of liquidating the so called "under-developed countries" and be prepared to share the good things of the world equitably. This will make a big call on the industrialzed countries. Are they prepared to make this sacrifice ? If not, all our efforts towards peace will be short-lived.

These points I have raised are only to urge that the Government of each country should follow

the way which meets the needs of its common population with an eye to their comfort and well-being, rather than from considerations of material accumulation of wealth. Until we shift our view-point to meet the requirements of the people and re-organize our economy to produce commodities needed by the masses of the people by our own efforts leaving international trade as a residuary benefit, we shall not be able to bring about world peace. We have to rationally organize each of our countries for peace. Mere paper agreements with imperialist governments, however well meant, will not lead to a stable peace. Real and lasting peace can only be obtained when we are organized for it and it be the outcome of our action. Today war is definitely the result of our economic actions, similarly, by a change of approach we can and must live for permanent peace. This needs a great determination and much courage to accomplish. If all under-developed countries realise this and stand as one man, peace cannot be far off. May we all unite in this common purpose and live and die for the peace of the World!

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